The Cases of Alice Clement

True Stories of the World's Greatest Woman Sleuth as Told by Herself to Courtney Riley Cooper

Kidding the Kidnapers

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ALICE Clement was going home—home after many miles of wanderings, home with the satisfaction of knowing that the quest she had been on had been successful. She had crossed the seas on this quest, she had traveled the countries of ancient Europe—she had been through difficulties and dangers; but they had left upon her youthful, almost childish face, no damaging mark. It used to be my standing expression to tell Alice Clement that she grew younger every day. And now, as we sat in the parlor car of a fast train to Chicago, I repeated the stock worn phrase, and she laughed, as she always did.

"That's because you are growing old about twice as fast as any one else in the world," she cried. "I suppose the next time I see you you will be hobbling along on a stick and wearing a beard down to your knees."

I looked out at the station clock and noticed that there remained a half hour before time for the train to leave.

"Considering that," I said, "won't you take pity on me and tell me what sent you to Europe?"

She seemed to debate a moment with herself and looked at me once or twice with that teasing expression I have come to know so well.

"Suppose," she said, "I told you the story of a piece of paper, a blind woman and a castle in Italy?"

"A what?" I asked, vaguely.

"More than that," was her answer; "but I will let it come in my story.

"I picked up the paper one morning to read the brief notice that the Italian section of town near Chicago avenue was somewhat excited over the disappearance of Rosita Cassanelli. Rosita, it seems, had started to confessional at the Holy Name church Sunday morning at about seven o'clock. She did not enter the place of worship, nor did she return to her home. The case was plain, according to the newspapers—the Black Hand!

"Some way that case interested me. I saw the captain and gained permission to work on it. An hour later I was in the little store of Antonio Cassanelli, obtaining from him in fiery Italian sentences what he knew about the kidnaping of his child. That was but little. Rosita had been there and now she was gone. Any enemies? Antonio shook his head and spread his hands. Any chance for ransom? The Italian smiled vaguely at me and pointed to his meager stock.

"It is all I have," he said.

"Yet large sums of money are not always sought by the men who steal children in Little Italy. To some, one hundred dollars means a vast amount. It was the time of the year when every lodging house harbored scores of laborers driven in by the cold weather from work in the railroad camps. They needed money, they were not particular as to how they got it, and the stealing of human flesh represented the best way of making a living.

"I left the little store and wandered along the street which I believed Rosita had walked on her way to church, asking questions through the Italian policeman who accompanied me, as we went along. At last I found what I sought, a little child who had seen Rosita talking to three men who had stopped her.' That was all the child knew, with the exception of the fact that she had seen one of the men take an envelope from his pocket, tear the flap from it, scribble something and then hand it to one of his companions, throwing away the empty part of the envelope.

"The child could give no description of the men, nor did she see them lure Rosita away.

"But I had what I sought—the chance of a clue and, together with my companion, we began the search for the piece of envelope. We knew there was only a small chance that it could tell us anything; but we must take that chance. Slowly we walked along the street, our eyes searching here and there, staring at every bit of paper, meeting disappointment after disappointment. At last I gave a little cry and leaped forward.

"A flapless envelope lay wedged between an ash barrel and a rickety shed. I seized it and eagerly sought some bit of writing that I hoped might be there. But I was disappointed.

"Yet there was something about that envelope which made me think. The paper was heavy and of the best quality. The shape was not that of the ordinary envelope purchased in our American stores. I held it to the light and then turned to my Italian friend, my face showing more of interest than a case of this ordinary kind should breed.

"'Defeo,' I said, 'Could there be any such thing as a kidnaping society?'

"'What do you mean?' the policeman asked.

"'I mean an organized band of kidnapers, who have grown wealthy through the stealing of children and the holding of them for ransom?'

"Defeo laughed. 'There can be most anything in Italy,' he said.

"'Well,' I mused, 'if this is the case of a society, the kidnaping has paid well enough to insure the owners of the business in the buying of the best of everything, stationery included. Beyond that, there seems to be a Latin mixed in it. Read this'—I handed him the envelope and watched his face as he held it to the light.

"His eyes grew wide in astonishment. 'The house of Immeo!' he said.

"'Rather familiar, eh?' I queried.

"'One of the oldest houses of Italy,' he answered. And then burst forth:

"'It is the big grand mistake!' he cried. 'How do we know where the envelope came from? That little kid, how did she know?' He shrugged his massive shoulders. 'It is all the one big grand mistake,' he added.

"'That's what I am going to find out about,' I answered. 'Mr. Immeo, or whatever his name is, may belong to a very aristocratic family and have his watermarked stationery and all that, but just the same he may be doing a little kidnaping on the side for pocket money. I guess that that is about all, Defeo. I think I can handle things alone from now on. Oh, by the way,' I called, as the policeman started away, 'if you happen to see a blind woman who is led by a little girl in this neighborhood please walk the other way. I have an idea she may want to do her begging when there are no policemen around.'

"Defeo looked at me and winked solemnly. We had worked together before

"That afternoon when I left the detective headquarters for my home my plans were all made. Too many times had I seen the efforts of the police to catch those who demanded ransom fail because they were working against heads that were wiser than theirs. I felt sure that should the kidnapers return Rosita they would not do so until they had sent a man ahead with a decoy child to determine whether the coast was clear. It was this decoy that I planned to furnish, and the child was to be my own little girl.

"That night a plodding, stumbling woman, led by a little child, made her exit from the apartment ordinarily inhabited by Alice Clement, and made her way to the Milton street section of Little Italy. She whined as she walked along, calling attention to the fact that she was blind since birth and begging of whomever she passed. At last the dingy lights of Milton street showed and she grasped more tightly the hand of the little girl who led her.

"'Be brave, honey!' she whispered, 'and whatever happens, remember that your every move is watched and guarded. No one is going to hurt you.'

"That woman was myself; the child was my daughter. Our quest was to find the man who would see in my little girl the very child they needed for my decoy. Dive after dive we entered, and through lowered lights I searched the faces of the ones I saw there. The hours went by, but nothing happened. We returned to our home at midnight, tired and excitement worn, but with no more information than when we had started. And the next day brought us a surprise. Antonio Cassanelli had received no threatening letters, no requests for ransom. That night we started forth again, with no better results. Still the mails remained quiet, still Antonio heard nothing concerning the child. A week went by and I was becoming discouraged, disheartened, and was plying the Italian section of the city with my little girl for the last time. Antonio had given her up as dead. I had almost given up the case as hopeless. Suddenly, however, as we started to leave an ill-smelling saloon, I struggled hard to repress an involuntary exclamation. Two men were sitting at a table near by. At the elbow of one I discerned an envelope the same in size and texture and color as the one I had found at the spot where Rosita Cassannelli had been kidnaped. I noticed it bore writing and the stamp of having come through the mails. I pressed hard on the hand of my little girl and urged her forward. With true instinct she went toward the men, giving her begging plea as she walked. They turned to her with a sneer and shook their heads, but I did not care. Under a fold of my dress I had swept the letter and held it with clutching fingers.

"An hour later two Italians sneered and shook their heads at the hundreds of questions which were being shot at them in my rooms at detective headquarters. They knew nothing, they said, and they could tell nothing. They never had seen the letter which lay before them, nor did they know of such a person as Count Immeo. Midnight came and we gave up hope of drawing from them any thing that would lighten the mystery of why a count apparently wealthy should attempt to steal the child of a poor Italian shopkeeper. We sent for Cassanelli and we questioned him. He shook his head and stared moodily before him, but gave us no information. I turned to the captain at last.

"'I guess I go to Europe,' I said half hopefully.

"'I guess you do,' was his answer, as he again picked up the letter and stared at it. Written in a practiced Italian hand was this message: 'Enclosed is the five hundred lira. By tomorrow we shall be safe on the sea and then to Immeo. Heaven bless you my men. (Signed) Roderico.' That was all but, it held forth to me a thousand conjectures, a thousand surmises each more wild and more varied than the other.

"Every word, every letter, was a blazing question mark. Why?—Why?

"Why should a count come to America, steal the child of a poor man and pay gladly for it? Why should he then seek escape across the sea and bless the men who had aided him?

"It was almost certain that he would not go to his estates in Immeo. I must trail him, track him from country to country. That night I left for New York. In Liverpool I found he had gone to London, in London I searched and struggled to at last learn he had departed for Edinburgh. The child was with him. Then I knew that he was leaping from city to city even as a rabbit leaps from clump of grass to clump of grass to evade his pursuers. Edinburgh led to Chantilly, Chantilly to Paris. There for two weeks I lost him. Then came the clue which sent met to Berne. It was in the shadow of the snow-capped Alps upon a little rustic bridge which crossed a tumbling mountain torrent that I found the man that I had chased so many thousand miles.

"Deep set of eye, kindly of feature, tall and aristocratic in appearance, he was somewhat different than the man whose description I had followed. He led a little girl as he walked along talking to her playfully, patting her hands now and then, and once in a while lifting her joyously into his arms and kissing her. That little girl was Rosita Cassanelli—but what a difference! The ragged clothes of the slums had changed to ones of the finest texture. A golden necklace from which was suspended a great glowing amethyst encircled her neck. Shoes of the finest make were on her feet. Every item of her dress and appearance were of elegance. For a moment I hesitated, unbelieving that this could be the person I had sought, that this could be the girl who once lived in the narrow confines of Chicago's Little Italy. At last I started forward and bending as though to tie a vagrant shoe-lace, whispered the name of 'Rosita,' into the child's ear.

"A frightened look crossed her countenance and she seemed to cling more tightly to the hand of the man by her side. Count Immeo looked downward and I rose to meet his glance.

"'Well?' he asked, and there was anger in his voice, 'what do you mean by frightening the child?'

"I smiled at him. 'Does her real name easily frighten her?' I asked.

"'Her real name?' A perplexed frown showed on his forehead.

"'What——'

"'What do I mean by calling her Rosita?' I asked.

"'Rosita?' he almost gasped.

"'Exactly,' I answered, 'the letter you wrote from New York enclosing five hundred lira as payment for the kidnapping of this child was fortunate—or unfortunate—enough to fall into the hands of the police. Now, count,' I said showing my badge, 'I would like to know why you kidnapped the child of a poor shopkeeper and brought her here to Switzerland bestowing upon her every affection, yet knowing that you risked prison in doing so.'

"The man had turned pale. He stood for a moment regarding me in wonderment, his arms encircling the form of the little girl as if to shield her. The eyes seemed to sink further back into his head than ever.

"'You followed, then?' he asked huskily.

"'That is evident,' was my answer, 'and I am liable to follow farther unless I gain the information that I seek. More than that, there may be a little question of international law as regards your coming back to the United States as a prisoner.'

"He took a step backwards? 'A prisoner?' he half cried. 'A prisoner for stealing my own child? Yes, laugh,' he burst forth—'laugh and say I lie. But she is mine. She—— I will tell you no more,' he half growled at me. 'I will tell you no more.'

"I stepped toward him and laid a determined hand on his arm.

"'You'll make the fullest of explanations,' I said, slowly, 'because I have made my arrangements for your arrest should I need it. As far as the law knows, this child is the daughter of Antonio Cassanelli, a shopkeeper of Chicago.'

"'The child is mine!' he answered almost hysterically. 'Mine! Mine! Mine! What have I given up money for all these years? What have I searched for and worked for and plotted for——'

"'You plotted then?' I burst in.

"Count Immeo started to reply, then his feverish eyes, sweeping the bridge, he saw those that might hear and his lips closed. He whirled and taking the child into his arms beckoned me to follow.

"Twenty minutes later I stood in a locked room of a hotel watching a nervous man as he paced up and down, his eyes set straight before him, his lips grim pressed, his hands clasped behind him. There was in his features that indication that the last straw needed to make the burden upon him all too heavy had fallen. His face seemed old and seared, his manner was that of man who had fought and fought only to lose in the end. At last he spoke.

"'Once there lived in Italy,' he said, 'a young man whose ways were of the crooked path. Life to him was not much, one day meant nothing more than another. It doesn't make any difference to you what the great mistake was that he made, but one day he made it and there was another man in the world besides himself who knew of it. The years went by and he married. He had not heard in all that time of the other person who knew his secret; then one day the crash came. Cassanelli appeared.'

"'Cassanelli?' I asked.

"Count Immeo went on as if he had not heard me.

"'He needed money and he told me of his need. Also he told me that if that money was not forthcoming the woman who was my wife would know the secret of my life. I paid him, the blackmailer—he went away smirking and called down upon me the blessings of the heavens, but I knew he would come again. A month and he was back smirking in the same old way, rubbing his hands together in anticipation of the money he was to get from me; hinting in his sinister manner that it was either the money or my happiness. Again I gave to him—again and again and again. He became a leech. His face followed me in my dreams and I knew that I must either pay him or he would tell, tell everything to the woman I loved. A year went by—two—the baby came, and still Cassanelli hung on drawing from me month by month the money that was sapping my resources. At last he showed before me and his face had lost the smile. "Fifty thousand lira," he said. "Fifty thousand?" I gasped. "Fifty thousand" was the cold reply. "I have lost much in games of chance—I am sick—I need much money."

"'It was more than I had—far more—and I begged with him, pleaded with him, but always the same answer greeted my every entreaty: "Fifty thousand lira or I tell."

"'In a week,' I begged.

"'Tomorrow' was his answer. That night I gritted my teeth and went before my wife. Trembling, I told her what I had striven so hard to conceal from her. My breath seemed to catch in my throat and my lips, my knees, my whole being shook as with a palsy. Word by word I forced it out and then like a condemned man awaited her answer. I screamed when she gave it—screamed with the greatest joy I had ever known. I leaped forward and clasped her in my arms—I covered her face with kisses. I wept, yes, wept like a child, in the fullness of my gratitude.

"'She had forgiven me! What did I care now what Cassanelli threatened? The one person for whom I cared had heard and had forgotten. I laughed the next day when he told me that he would give me no more time, laughed in his face and dared him to injure me. I threw him out of the house and stood smiling at a window, watching his upraised arms and listened to his fevered curses. I was free! Free!'

"The face of the man before me had lightened and become almost exalted, as he told his story. But now the features grew saddened again and the words came more slowly.

"'A week later the baby was gone. I knew where. I knew also that if I set the police on the trail that death would be the result. I was playing against a man who had vengeance as his object in life now, and I could do nothing that would further his anger against me.

"'God,' he burst forth, 'the agony of it.'

"'The days and nights we spent just staring ahead, just wondering whether she were living or dead! Waiting for the information that we felt must come to us some day. The fiendish exulting letter that would tell us how she died! Ten times I started for the police but my heart gave way. I found a way to reach him with the news that I was endeavoring by every way I could to raise the money. Some way or other I managed to keep a vague track of him and at least I found he had left for the States. I learned where he was in Chicago. No; I did not call the police. I was afraid even then of the mischance that would end my baby's life. I schemed, I watched, I plotted—and one day there came the chance I had waited weeks for. I took it. I got my baby back by the same means by which she had been taken away from me! I stole her!

"'And now,' he cried out as he whirled and faced me, the trapped beast showing in his countenance, 'take her away from me if you can! I will fight you! I will fight every one—for her! Arrest me—throw me in prison, but I will still have my little girl with me! You can't take her away from me!' he almost screamed. 'You can't—you can't!'"

Miss Clement looked at me with a smile in her eyes.

"Well?" I asked.

"That's all," she answered.

"And after traveling all those miles you believed this man?"

"Certainly," was her reply, "after I had cabled the information which caused Cassanelli to confess."

She looked up suddenly. "Court Cooper," she said, "you'd better be saying good-by and getting out of this train or you will be buying a ticket to Albany. It's just half a minute before leaving time."

WITH TRUE INSTINCT, SHE WENT TOWARD THE MEN, GIVING HER BEGGING PLEA AS SHE WALKED.

NOT LIVING UP TO ADVICE

Matron's Actions as Husband Phoned Didn't Coincide With Her Talk to Fair College Grad.

"I don't know what to think," said the college graduate.

"It's the first admission of the kind since you got your diploma," said the old maid.

"What to think about what?" asked the matron just turned thirty. Her mouth was down at the corners and there was a wrongs-for-women look in her eye.

"About marrying. Dave is beginning to insist on marrying just as I am beginning to see that I have some future ahead if I work out by myself."

"Don't hesitate a minute," said the matron just turned thirty, and brought her teeth together with a noticeable click. "What can you do better than anything else?"

"I am interested, you know, in celestial mathematics."

"Then go in for it. Go in for anything that has the word 'celestial' in it. It sounds promising. It may lead you into heaven. Marrying won't. There's no use to pretend that it will."

"You said last week," began the old maid, but the matron just turned thirty wouldn't let her go on.

"I am talking seriously now," maintained the matron, "and as one woman to another I am telling this young thing that a woman who expects marriage to bring satisfaction is following an ignis fatus. Men are all very well for down town, but the woman who looks to a man to make life seem worth while is a woman who is fated for a grand awakening—"

The telephone bell rang then, and while the matron just turned thirty answered it the two regarded each other with looks that said that they were astonished at her and commiserative of her. Then her voice at the telephone came on to them in languid cadence: "Why, yes, I suppose I can go. O, yes, I suppose I want to. Really. You surprise me. From the way you rushed off this morning I should hardly have thought— Yes, but what made you forget? You have missed—Ye-es. I have, too. You old darling! All right, then, hurry home. I'll be ready."

She came back from the telephone to the two who had listened in conscienceless attention. "Jim and I are going to have a little celebration tonight," she announced, shamelessly. "It's our anniversary."

"You hadn't mentioned it before," said the old maid."

"No—he—we—it slipped our minds this morning." She went out of the room then, red but radiant.

"If you really want any advice about marrying," said the old maid, turning on the college graduate, "you will have to come to us single women. You can't believe anything the married ones tell you. They are here today and there tomorrow. Their conclusions about matrimony rest upon no surer base than whether or not their husbands remembered to kiss them good-by this morning. They haven't any perspective. It takes an old maid to be a president of a congress of mothers, and it takes one to illuminate the subject of matrimony for the young and undecided."

"Turn on your searchlight. Let's have the illumination."

"O, all that it comes to is that each woman has to decide for herself," said the old maid.—New York Evening Post.

FALSE THOUGHT OF ROMANCE

Sad and Dismal Tale of a Young Man and a Lovely Damsel Who Sold Soap.

Love came at first sight to the young man when he saw her. She was behind the soap counter, dispensing perfumed soap to those who wished to buy it, and she was all his impressionistic fancy favored in woman.

Her face was adorable. Her hair was coiled bewitchingly. Her slender fingers were deliciously pink. Her dress, being neat and inexpensive, revealed an economic nature, while a necklace prevented the aspersion of parsimony. The young man, just from college, with high intellectual notions and yet sensible opinions as to necessary thrift, believed her to be his affinity. He knew that, taken from the department store and placed in the social environment that was his, she would scintillate and charm.

He determined to have a word with her—to please his ears with the music of her voice; for he was sure her voice must be musical. Elsewhere he would have waited for the conventional introduction; here, where she sold soap, the matter of meeting was made obvious. He approached.

"Will you let me have a five-cent bar of soap?" he asked—which, though commonplace, was as good as anything else for him to say.

She smiled angelically, revealing poetic, pearly teeth.

"We ain't got no five-cent cakes," she told him; "them in the case is ten an' twenty-five."

He turned away. His romance had died a-borning.

Foretell Coming Weather.

Long range weather forecasting appears to be gaining credence, little by little, with the progress of meteorology. The last annual report of the Dutch East Indian meteorological service mentions the fact that forecasts of the strength and weather characteristics of the easterly monsoon are now issued at Batavia each April. Official monsooon forecasts have been regularly made in British India for many years. In the United States weather bureau Sunday forecasts for a week in advance have become an established institution. In all these cases the forecasts deal with only the broader features of the weather over wide areas.

Steel Furniture Coming.

Steel furniture for offices and factories will, during the next ten years, entirely supplant that now being made from wood, according to an official of the largest metal equipment manufacturing concern in the United States.

As steel furniture and fixtures are fireproof and more economical, builders are discarding the old-fashioned wooden equipment and installing steel in many of the new buildings.

The use of this material also enables the floor space of the average factory to be increased, and lower rates are given by insurance companies when this class of furniture is installed.